

A N Y
R E V I E W
O F

ABRAHAM'S CASE,

WITH REGARD TO THE OFFERING UP

HIS SON ISAAC,

WHOM HE LOVED.

Whom He Loved

By JAMES FAVELL, D.D.

*The reader is desired, before he peruses this Treatise, to be
acquainted with the history of the case of Isaac, and the
circumstances attending it, as related in the Bible.*

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W E I V E R

OF

ABRAHAM'S CASE

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WITH REGARD TO THE OFFERING UP

HIS SACR



WHOM HE LOVED.

BY JAMES FAVELL, D.D.

The reader is desired, before he peruses this Tract, to see with the eye of attention, what hath been said between the 81st and 96th pages, and between the 591st and 620th of the 2d Vol. in two parts, of the Divine Legation of *Moses* demonstrated. Edit. 1741.

W. B. C. L. I. X.

REVIEW
ON
ABRAHAM'S CASE, &c.

IN the twenty-second chapter of the first book of *Moses*, called *GENESIS*, at the fifteenth and three following verses it is thus related: — *And the Angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of Heaven, the second time; And said, by myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not with-held thy Son, thine only Son: That, in blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed, as the Stars of the Heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And, in thy seed, shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed: because thou hast obeyed my voice.*

In which words, we have the declaration of a promise made by God to *Abraham*, and to his seed after him, of an extraordinary Blessing; (a Blessing as well of a spiritual as of

a temporal nature; that of the temporal nature, was that his posterity should be numerous and flourishing; that of the spiritual, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed :) and the reason given for the foundation of it, which is, that when he was tried, he offer'd up his only Son; in whom, alone, seem'd to center all the promises which God had, upon other accounts made to him, thus even against hope, as Saint *Paul* expresses it, * believing in hope; and being fully perswaded that what God had promised, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not, as tho' they were, he was able, also, to perform.

The character of this great and good man being, in Scripture, every where well spoken of, and propos'd to mankind, as an example to imitate, both for believing in and obeying his God; but, being objected to, in this particular, as his having been guilty of a rash and inconsiderate action, it may not be amiss, in a brief and concise manner, upon the principles of reason, to review his case, and to see whether he stands clear of this imputation; especially as an ^b author of distinction, in order to favour his own interpretation, has, by implication, asserted, that the sense, in which the historic truth of the relation of this fact has been hitherto understood (notwithstanding what may have been said in vindication of it) is attended with inexplicable difficulties, which have been long the stumbling-block of infidelity.

First, then it is objected, "That *Abraham* stood to *Isaac* in
 * Rom. iv. 17, 18, 21. ^b Div. Leg. Vol. II. p. 590. 608. 614. 626.

“in the relation of a Father, and that from hence he be-
 “came oblig’d to guard and protect that Life which he had
 “been the instrument of producing; which obligation
 “we are told, as it is founded in nature, so it is independent
 “of, and antecedent to any divine command; nay, that it
 “is antecedent, even to the consideration of a Deity:
 “because it must and would be the same, whether there
 “was any such thing as a Deity:”

And, indeed, thus much we must allow, that as *Abraham*
 stood to *Isaac*, in the relation of a Father, so from thence,
 he did become oblig’d to guard and protect that life which
 he had been the instrument of producing. But to assert that
 this obligation, as it is founded in nature, is independent
 of, and antecedent to any divine command; nay, that it
 is antecedent, even to the consideration of a Deity, seems
 to be representing the case otherwise than it really is.

God, I am at liberty to suppose, was the author both
 of *Abraham's* and his son's existence; nay, in a more
 extraordinary manner, he became the author of the latter.
 He was given, at a time, when, in the course of nature,
 his parents could not expect it; and that, at the special
 appointment of God. God therefore being thus, con-
 fessedly, the author of their beings, may in a direct and
 most proper sense, be said to have an original right and
 property, in them, antecedent to any relations that sub-
 sisted between them, these being consequential, and en-
 tirely dependent upon their existence.

Mr. Chubb's Treatise, on the Case of *Abraham*, with regard to his
 offering up *Isaac*. Gen. xviii. 14.

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In order to make which appear, the plainer, let us consider, with Mr. *Wollaston*, 'that "All beings originally depend upon God, for their existence; now upon whom depends their existence, upon him also must depend the intrinsic manner of their existence or the natures of those beings; and again, upon whom depend their being and natures, upon him must depend the necessary effects and consequences of their being. — And lastly, as to the nature of those relations which lie between ideas (he might have said persons) and things, really existing, these must result from the natures of the things themselves; all which the supreme Being either causes or permits. Since then, their mutual relations are nothing else, but their manners of being, with respect to each other, the natures of these relations will be determin'd by the natures of the things themselves;" but these depend, originally, on God.

As God, therefore thus gave *Abraham* a son, at a time, when in the course of nature, he could not expect it, so he had certainly a right to recall him whensoever he should think proper. The great question, however, arising from hence, is, whether, as God himself always directs his actions according to reason and the nature of things, and requires that his servants should have him for example; whether, I say, he should pitch upon *Abraham* to execute this his command, or whether supposing he did so, *Abraham* should comply with it?

And, here, we may take notice, that had God commanded *Abraham* to do any thing that should contradict that part of the

* Religion of Nature delineated p. 72.

A B R A H A M' s C A S E, &c.

the law of nature, which is founded not on the will, but on the existence of God, and on the immutable nature and reason of things; had he commanded him to *bate* his *blameless Son*, or to *take delight* in *cruelty* and *barbarity* towards him, as the command had been unjust, so it ought not to have been complied with: for God can not possibly *contradict* himself, as that would implead his very being. But when he requires him, only to take away that life, which by a free gift, he had, so remarkably, been the cause of, no wonder that *Abraham* should comply with the command: for since the right which even, an innocent person has to life, is not founded on the essential nature and reason of things, but merely, in the will and free gift of God, 'tis plain, God may, as justly, appoint it to be taken away when and after what manner he pleases, as he had a right to give him being, according to his pleasure.

To this purpose let us hear further, what that great master of reason and argument, Dr. *Clarke*, says; "Of things evil or immoral there are three sorts. Some things are evil, only, because prohibited by a positive law, and these it is evident, are no longer evil than the law which forbids them, continues in being. Other things are evil, unalterably, in their own nature; even so, as that it would be a direct contradiction and absolute impossibility to suppose, that God should, at any time, whatsoever, or upon any occasion, command them. Such are hatred of God and goodness; the worship of false gods; a malicious or cruel temper of mind and the like. Now between these two sorts

“ sorts of evils, there is a third, which is not only evil be-
 “ cause contrary to any positive law, but contrary also, even
 “ to the law of nature itself, yet not so unalterably, but that
 “ in some particular circumstances, when expressly com-
 “ manded by the God of nature, it may cease to be contrary
 “ to that law. And of this kind is the taking away the
 “ life of an innocent man, as in the case of *Abraham* and
 “ his Son; which tho’ contrary to the law of nature, to be
 “ done, by the will of man or of any power on earth, yet
 “ may, without any inconsistency, be, in a particular case,
 “ commanded by God: because God, who gave life, may
 “ take it away, when he pleases, either by a natural disease,
 “ or by any other instrument, which he thinks fit.”

This objection, therefore, seems to have been founded, on a most gross and palpable mistake, concerning property, viz. by confounding the different notions of it, when consider’d, with respect to God, and with regard to his creatures: for had *Abraham* been consider’d in the relation of a father, only; and not as a being dependent on his Maker, it could never have been justifiable in him, to take away that life, which he had been the instrument of producing; (provided that *Isaac* had done nothing to forfeit his title to life, and consequently his right to paternal protection.) But when *Abraham* is consider’d, not only as a father, but also as a being, in the relation above mention’d; this gives the thing a quite different turn: for as the author of this objection, himself, elsewhere observes, “ property is, originally, God’s peculiar: because,” as he expresses

* Mr. Chubb’s Inquiry concerning Property. p. 85.

expresses it, "God hath a sole property in every thing, which he is the original supreme cause of, and that is every thing without Himself; so that we have no property, with respect to God, whatever we are, in what ever is derived from and is dependent upon him."

In short, it is contrary, we allow, to the law of nature, that any one should put an innocent person to death: because no man has a natural right or authority to that end. But God, in whom all right, property and dominion is vested, may take away the life of an innocent person, by what means or by what instruments he thinks proper: *Abraham* therefore, in being ready to execute the apparent design of God, did not act contrary to the reason or equity of this law, Thou shalt not kill an innocent person; but agreeably to a known law, which no circumstances can alter the subject-matter of, which is, That thou shalt obey thy God, in whatsoever he commands thee. Saint *Augustine*, to this purpose, saith, "If God command, and this command be clearly and doubtlessly discern'd to be his, who dares call their obedience in question? who dares calumniate the duty of holy love? But every one that shall resolve to sacrifice his son unto God, shall not be cleared of guilt, in such a resolution, because *Abraham* was praised for it: for the soldier that, in his order and obedience to his governour (under whom he fighteth lawfully) killeth a man, the city never makes him guilty of homicide; nay, it makes him guilty of falsehood and contempt

Here we may take notice that Mr. *Chubb*, in his reasoning on different subjects contradicts himself.

“contempt, if he does not labour, in all that he can,
 “to do it. But if he had killed the man, of his own volun-
 “tary pleasure, then had he been guilty of shedding human
 “blood; and so he is punish’d for doing of that unbidden,
 “for the not doing of which, being bid, he should also have
 “been punish’d. If this be thus at the general’s command,
 “then why not at the Creator’s?” It is the intention
 and not the letter of the law, which, in our inquiries,
 upon the subject of morality, we are always to consider:
 when therefore one person, at the special appointment of
 God, puts another to death, he is so far from acting against
 the law of nature; that the law of nature, indispensibly
 requires that he should obey. It is true, he, who, in such a
 case, shall pretend to be the instrument in the hand of
 God, must have a commission or revelation, as clear as
 was that to *Abraham*; otherwise, as Dr. *Clarke*, very justly,
 observes ^k “All impiety and superstition may be brought,
 “in the place of religion, as those of the church of *Rome*,
 “under pretence of doing service to God, are, perpetually,
 “destroying the best of his servants.”

But, again, it is objected, ^l That “*Abraham* could not, in
 “the nature of the thing, have any rational satisfaction
 “that the command was divine: for, it is said, that sup-
 “posing he receiv’d information, in the present case, either
 “by a strong impression upon his own mind, or by a dream
 “or a vision or a voice from heaven, or by the report of a
 “person, whom he esteem’d an angel or the like; as he
 could

^lCity of God. p. 35. ^k Sermons Vol. II. p. 259. ^lMr. *Chubb*’s Treatise
 on the Case of *Abraham* with regard to his offering up *Isaac*.

“ could not be absolutely certain, that he might not be
 “ deluded or impos'd upon; so in the nature of the thing,
 “ the moral unfitness of the action was a stronger reason
 “ against the divinity of that command, than any of those
 “ extraordinary ways, in which that command was con-
 “ veyed to him, could possibly be for it.”

Whereupon, we may take notice that this objection is, altogether founded on supposition of the limitation of God's power in this respect, as if matters discoverable, by the ordinary use and exercise of reason, might be more easily and perfectly known, that way, than by any immediate act, of the supreme Being, upon our minds. Which by the way, we may observe, is a most arrogant presumption, seeing that the doing of this implies no manner of contradiction, and consequently, must be the object of power in Him, who is the original source and fountain of power. It is even absurd to affirm, that He who created our very beings, is incapable of acting upon them; or, that He cannot, as well, impress sentiments upon the mind, capable of receiving them, as produce motion, in bodies capable of being moved.

And as impressions may be thus perceiv'd, so likewise may it be known from whence these impressions come: for no one can reckon it impossible, but that God may, if he pleases, make us as intimately conscious that these impressions are made by him, as that any impressions are made on us, at all, as a judicious author well observes;
 “ God having so contriv'd the nature of our souls, that

“ we

“ Smith's Select Discourses p. 163.

"we may converse, one with another, and inform one another, of things we knew not before, would not make us so deaf to his divine voice, that breaks the rocks and rends the mountains asunder; he would not make us so indisciplinable, in divine things, as that we should not be capable of receiving any impressions from himself." For as he elsewhere expresses it; "He that made our souls in his own image and likeness, can easily find a way into them; can so shine out of himself upon our glassy understandings as to beget in them a picture of himself, his own will and pleasure, and turn the soul (as the phrase is in Job, xxxviii. 14.) like wax or clay to the seal of his own light." —

And thus, with regard to the case before us, supposing that *Abraham*, (having had much intercourse, with God) receiv'd his information, in the same way, by which he had receiv'd several divine revelations before; all which were fulfilled and made good to him, according to the times appointed; surely there was just and sufficient reason, to conclude concerning the divinity of the command. However, 'tis plain, he was not deceiv'd: for the text assures us, that God did, *really*, tempt him°. And to prevent the least suspicion in *Abraham*, or rather posterity, of mistake in this matter, *the angel of the Lord*, by way of approbation, after the action was over, called unto him the second time. At the first, saying, *now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not with-held thy son, thine only son, from me.* And at

the
 ° Smith's Select Discourses p. 373. ° Eum ejusque fidem et obedientiam examini subjecit, non ergo, proprie, tentat Deus ut ipse sciat, sed ut hominibus manifestaret quantum *Abram* timeret Deum. Synops. Crit. Vol. II. D. 187. 3

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the second, pronouncing, that, *in blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed: because thou hast obeyed my voice;*

A compliance in which affair, therefore, is what *Abraham* stands, in holy Scripture, so highly commended for; and which is made the ground of God's extraordinary favours to him: for tho' God gave the command, not with intent that it should be executed, but that he might take an occasion from thence, to shew mankind the necessity of complying with his precepts, into however difficult circumstances by so doing they may be driven; so when that end was serv'd, and *Abraham* had shewn a steady resolution, that he would deny himself, in so signal an instance, rather than neglect to do his duty; then did God recall the command, giving the patriarch, notwithstanding, the above-mention'd testimony and assurance, that *in blessing, he would bless him, and in multiplying, he would multiply his seed, as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore*—and that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed, because he had obeyed his voice; thereby, assuring him, and in him, all mankind, that God hath a sovereign right of dominion, over all his creatures; and that had he executed the command of God (admitting it really to have been such) in offering his son, for a burnt-offering, at the

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time

time and place appointed, the action had been justifiable, and himself clear when he was judged.

From whence we may infer, that things establish'd by the mere positive command of God, may be changed by the same authority that appointed them; that things contrary to that part, even of the law of nature itself, which is founded originally in the will of God, and not in the necessary and essential nature and reason of things, may be done, upon particular and extraordinary occasions, by the immediate and express command of God; but that that part of the law of nature, which is founded, not on the will, but on the existence of God, and on the immutable nature and relation of things, this is in no circumstances capable of alteration.

Lastly, we may infer, that the will of God is that standard, to which our actions ought, finally to have respect; and that as fitness is, only one way, whereby we learn what the divine will is, so whatever else will point out God's will (it being impossible he should require of us any thing dissonant to fitness) must strictly and conscientiously, be observ'd by us.

As to what has been advanced, on this head, with design, as it may seem, to confound infidelity and to overthrow the cavils of it; That "the command was merely, an information, by action, instead of words, of the great sacrifice; for the redemption of mankind, given at the earnest request of *Abraham*, who long'd, impatiently, to see

* Div. Leg. of Moses, vol. II. p. 84. 626.

“see Christ’s day;” or whether that text * brought by this author to support this interpretation, with his comment upon it, be sufficient for that purpose; as the thought is not wholly new, so neither is it wholly to be disregarded.

Certain it is, that in the first ages of the world, mutual converse was frequently upheld, by a mixt discourse of words and actions; I say of words and actions: because, I believe, it will scarce be found, that ever any converse, either was or could be carried on by actions only, without words, either previous to or explanatory of them; neither does it appear that ever language was so barren of expression as to require such a mode of converse. “Julius Higinus, in Libro, de vitâ rebusque illustrium virorum sexto, legatos dicit à Samnitibus ad C. Fabricium, imperatorem populi Romani venisse, et memoratis multis magnisque rebus; quæ benè ac benevolè, post redditam pacem Samnitibus fecisset, obtulisse dono, grandem pecuniam, orasseque uti acciperet utereturque; atque id facere Samnites dixisse, quòd viderent multa ad splendorem Domus atque victus defieri; neque pro magnitudine dignitateque lautum paratum esse. Tum Fabricium planas manus ab auribus ad oculos et infra, deinceps, ad nares et ad os et ad gulam, atque inde porro ad ventrem imum deduxisse.” Frustra, autem, deduxisset planas manus ab auribus ad oculos et infra, deinceps, ad nares &c. nisi legatis ita respondisset, “Dum illis omnibus membris, quæ attigisset obfistere atque imperare posset, nunquam quicquam

* Div. Leg. of Moses. vol. II. p. 591.

* John viii. 56.

quam defuturum: propterèa pecuniam, quâ nihil sibi esset usus, ab iis, quibus eam sciret usui esse, non accipere. " That this mode of converse, whether originally made use of, out of choice or necessity, 'tis plain, subsisted longer than necessity requir'd it, in regard of language; and no wonder it did so, considering the superior advantage it has, in making an impression. That God himself made use of this method, in his communications to his prophets, particularly, to *Abraham*, as appears from his vision, by his expostulation with God, " saying, *Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?* — And he brought him forth abroad and said, *Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said so shall thy seed be.* — And *Abraham* said further, *Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit this land?* And he said unto him, — *Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, (according to the custom of making covenants) and laid each piece, one against the other, but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcases, Abram drove them away. God signifying to him by this visionary scene, that his posterity should be assaulted, but yet delivered. * Volucres infestantes cadavera, denotant Ægyptios et Ogum et alios hostes; Abram abigens, significat Deum tutelarem et liberatorem Judæorum.*

Accordingly it has been observ'd by commentators; is

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* To this purpose see Dr. Rutherford's Theological determination.

" Gen. xv. 8.

* Synops Crit. vol. I. p. 160.

particularly taken notice of by the Harmonist¹, and was clearly seen by the Compilers of our liturgy, who have appointed the twenty-second chapter of GENESIS, to be read in the service of the day of our Lord's Passion, that the command given by God to *Abraham*, to offer up his only son, was typical or expressive of the death and resurrection of Christ, and of the redemption of mankind thereby. Chemnitius in his application of this our Saviour's address to the Jews² says, *Passionem et resurrectionem meam vidit Abrahamus, in immolatione et liberatione filii Isaaci*³: probabile est Isaacum, says the commentator, cujus oblatio illustris erat typus oblationis Christi, in eo etiã, cum antitypo, convenisse; ut circa annum trigesium tertium ætatis offeretur. In iis etiã erat typus Christi; primò, quòd in monte Moriã oblatu; secundò, quòd tertio die; tertio, quòd primò portavit lignum, deinde lignum portavit ipsum; quartò, quòd ligatus esset manibus pedibusque. Ligavit, non quia timeret ne fugeret aut rebellaret, sed ut significaret ligationem Christi in cruce, et quia mos erat antiquissimus ligari victimas. Huic actioni, tanquã benedictionum fundamento innitentes, Judæi precantur, *תרחץ לפניך עמך* *דוד*⁴: nay, Maldonatus, upon that above-mention'd passage of scripture⁵, which his lordship lays as the foundation of his thesis, goes still farther; *Mihi, inquit, non videtur quòd Christus dicit, vidit et gavisus est, aut de solâ fide aut de figurâ*

¹ Chemnitii *Harmon. Evangelica*. p. 1468.

² John. viii. 56.

³ Synops. Crit. vol. I. p. 190.

⁴ Aspiciatur coram te constrictio uni-

geniti tui. ⁵ St. John viii. 56.

⁶ Wolfogenii vol. I. p. 878.

figurâ vel propheticâ revelatione, intelligi posse. Cum enim dicit, vidit, haud dubium quin eo modo vidisse dicat, quo videre, tantoperè, dixerat concupisse, non autem concupiverat solâ videre fide; quia antequam fidem haberet, cum nullam de Christo, notitiam haberet, diem ejus videre concupiscere non poterat; postquam habuit, concupiscebat quidè, ut non solâ fide, quia fide jam Christi diem videbat, neque per figuram aut revelationem, quia cum fidem jam certissimam haberet, nec revelatione illi opus erat, nec poterat ejus satiare desiderium. Sentit ergò, says the Socinian, *Abrahamum*, reipsâ, vidisse diem Christi, non quidè vivum sed mortuum. Thus Crellius, in like manner, in explanation of the word vidit, in this passage of St. *John's*, says, * Non est verisimile Christum, de re tantâ, sine scripturâ, prænuntiatum fuisse. —

And, indeed, no doubt, one great purpose of God therein, was to shew to the patriarch, as in a scene, and in him succeeding generations, the manner and circumstances of that redemption. And tho' the historian seems silent on this head, unless it may be implied in the expostulation before mention'd, yet from the expression ἡγαλλιάσατο, made use of by St. *John* as equivalent to what our Saviour might speak in the Syriac, which according to the real meaning of the word, as *Bæza* observes, implies summum desiderium rei nondum presentis sed tamen futuræ: and which he translates gestivit rather than exultavit; (gestivit ut videret, sc. affectum animi quid ni gestibus corporis exprimeret?)

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* Vol. II. p. 93.

† Gen. xv. 8.

‡ St. John viii. 56.

we will allow that it might be given at the request of *Abraham*; that is, that *Abraham* was solicitous and desirous of being let into the manner and circumstances of man's redemption. Thus Dr. *Clarke's* notes, in his Paraphrase on this passage, ἡγαλλιάσατο, not as we render it, rejoiced, but earnestly, desired and long'd to see my day. And from hence, the thing is probable: for if *Abram* could thus expostulate with God, upon a temporal promise made to him; whereby shall I know, that I shall inherit this land? And God thought proper to give him assurance thereof, by an action expressive of it; no wonder that *Abram* should, at least, be equally desirous to know, how and in what manner, that spiritual promise should be fulfilled to him, that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed; neither is it to be suppos'd that God would refuse to gratify him in like manner in his inquiry.

That *Abram* complain'd for want of seed to God, the text assures us; ^b that he stagger'd not at the promise of God, notwithstanding the improbability of the thing, that he should have an heir that should come out of his own bowels, by *Sarai* his wife, is expressly affirm'd ⁱ; that his belief of so improbable an event ^k was counted to him for righteousness, is also fully declar'd. Thus, before *Abram* left *Haran*, at the time when God said unto him, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee, he promis'd that he would make of him a great nation, and

^b Gen. xy. 2, 3.ⁱ Ibid. ver. 4.^k Ibid. ver. 6.

and that he should be a blessing, ——— and that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed¹. This he did no doubt, to encourage him in his obedience. And the All-seeing eye of God perfectly discover'd to him what subject he had to deal with: for before the destruction of *Sodom*, says God, apart from *Abraham*^m, Shall I hide from *Abraham* the thing which I will do? seeing that *Abraham* shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him: for I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon *Abraham* that which he hath spoken of him?

Here, then it sufficiently appears, without enumerating the several instances of obedience in the Patriarch, which, I think, are found to be ten upon record, that a good disposition was observ'd in *Abraham*; and that it was not without reason that God had promis'd him these blessings. But in order to evidence to the world, that it was not without reason that God had made him these promises, he was pleas'd in the very instance, wherein he may be suppos'd to have gratified his curiosity, to put him to a severe trial, to offer up his only Son. This the Patriarch, difficult as the task was, readily consents to, and in this the sum of his obedience may be cast up; accounting as the Apostle expresses itⁿ, that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also, he receiv'd him, in a figure; in figuram mysterii cujusdam significativam;

in

¹Gen. xii. 1, 2, 3. ^m Ibid. xviii. 17, 18, 19. ⁿ Hebr. xi. 19.

in typum mortis et resurrectionis Christi^o. In that translation, which has Archbishop *Cranmer's* prologue to it^p, it is thus render'd: "For he consider'd that God was able
"to raise the dead up again, from whence also he receiv'd
"him in a [certain] similitude [of the resurrection.]"

And now I cannot but by the bye take notice both of Archbishop *Tillotson's* and Dr. *Clarke's* misapplication of this passage of Scripture. These two great men, not perceiving that the offering up of *Isaac* was an information, by action of the great sacrifice, for the redemption of Mankind, as well as a publick declaration of *Abraham's* fidelity, have made *ὁθεν ἐκπορεύετο* to refer to the miraculous birth of *Isaac*. The Archbishop's words are these^q; "I know that
"this is, by interpreters, generally understood of *Isaac's*
"being deliver'd from the jaws of death, when he was
"laid upon the altar, and ready to be slain. But the text
"seems not to speak of what happen'd after, but of some-
"thing that had pass'd before, and so the words, *ὁθεν ἐκπορεύετο*,
"ought to be render'd in the time past; from whence also
"he had receiv'd him, in a figure." Dr *Clarke* says, "These
"last words, from whence also he receiv'd him, in a figure,
"are by expositors understood to signify *Isaac's* near escape
"from death, when he was just upon the point of being
"offer'd. But this being an event not foreseen by *Abraham*
"before it came to pass, could not be to him an argument
"at that time to confirm his faith: And therefore I think,
"the words will bear another sense, much more pertinent
"to

^o Synops. Crit. Vol. 5. p. 1365. ^p Edit. 1572. ^q *Tillotson's* Sermons Vol. II. p. 13. Folio. ^r *Clarke's* Sermons Vol. II. p. 247. 8vo.

“to the apostle’s intention. *Abraham*, says he, accounted
 “that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead;
 “and he had the more reason so to account: because he
 “had already, once before, receiv’d him from the dead, in
 “a figure; namely, at the time of his birth when he sprang
 “from parents, as good as dead.” But with all due regard
 to what they thus say with good intention, having borrowed
 their notion from Dr. *Hammond*, the verb ἐχομίσατο, being
 tertiæ personæ, temporis indefiniti primi mediæ vocis, is,
 by no means, capable of being render’d, receperat, ac-
 cording to grammar; neither ought it to be so translated
 as explain’d above. Let the apostle however, be his own
 expositor, and by consulting the 39th verse of this chapter,
 where he uses the same word in the plural, we shall find
 that it is not possible to understand it in a time different
 from the imperfect.

What I contend for therefore is, that *Abraham* had
 more merit than what his lordship is willing to grant him;
 that the action had something more in it, than a mere
 significative mark, like words or letters of only arbitrary
 import. And this is agreeable to what St. *James* affirms*,
 where he says, was not *Abraham* our father justified by
 works, when he had offered *Isaac* his son upon the altar?
 seest thou how faith wrought with his works? and by
 works was his faith made perfect. And the scripture was
 fulfilled, which saith, *Abraham* believed God, and it was
 imputed to him for righteousness——that is, then was
 the scripture fulfilled or rather manifested to the world,
 when

* Div. Leg. Vol. II. p. 617. 626. 629. ch. ii. 21, 22, 23.

when it appear'd plainly, by this affecting instance, how truly it was written of him^a. Tum demùm patefactum five cognitum fuit, says the Commentator^{*}, nempè hominibus, nam Deo experimento non habet opus, quàm verè illud scriptum fuerat, et *Abrahamum* verà vivâque fide præditum esse, et proindè à Deo justificatum.

Indeed *Maimonides*, (whose opinion his lordship disclaims in words^y, tho' in effect, admits of) hath universally determin'd, that all those actions which are attributed to the prophets in the course of their prophecy, (excepted always those, of *Moses*) were only imaginary, represented merely to the prophets fancy, either in a dream or a prophetic vision. And for confirmation of this, he brings in many instances^z; and particularly the case before us^z, when it is said, et clamavit angelus Domini ad *Abrahamum* secundo, e cœlis^b, as well as another, R. Chijah's exposition, which the generality of mankind seem as little to have suspected; I mean that passage of *GENESIS*, chapter the eighteenth, which he makes to relate to nothing else, but a prophetic apparition of three angels to *Abraham*, which promis'd a Son: For tho' they are said to eat and to drink with him, and

^a Gen. xv. 6. ^{*} Synops. Vol. I. p. 1442. ^y Div. Leg. Vol. II. p. 84.

^z More Nevochim Pars II. cap. 46. ^b Ibid. cap. 41.

^b Exposuimus in capite præcedenti, says *Maimonides*, quod ubicunque visionis angeli vel sermonis ejus mentio fit, id intelligendum sit in visione prophetiæ vel somnio factum esse. Nihil etiam refert five à principio scribat quòd viderit angelum, five ex sermone ejus videatur et colligatur quòd primò illum pro homine habuerit, sed in fine, quòd angelus sit, ipse innotuerit; nam postquam, ex fine, intelligis angelum fuisse, id quòd vidit et quòd sermonem habuit, constat tibi simul quòd ab initio negotii, fuerit visio prophetiæ aut somnium propheticum.

and two of them to depart from him to *Sodom*, to be there entertain'd by *Lot*, whom they rescued from the violence of the men of that city, and led him the next day out from thence, before they brought down fire and brimstone from heaven, upon it; yet this does not alter his opinion as to that matter: *Eò quod fundamento huic quod notum est, innitatur*^c; nullam prophetiam fieri, nisi uno aliquo duorum istorum modorum, quorum Deus meminit, quando ait, *In visione me notum faciam ei, in somnio loquar ei*^d. From all which he asserts, 'Ex iis quæ abduxi, judicare potes de illis quæ sicco pede præterivi; omnia sunt ejusdem speciei et formæ; omnia sunt visio tantum prophetica. Quæcunque in ejusmodi visione dicuntur, ut quempiam aliquid fecisse, audivisse, exivisse, introivisse, dixisse, compellatum esse, stetisse, sedisse, ascendisse, descendisse, ivisse, interrogasse, interrogatum esse; illa omnia sunt intelligenda in visione prophetiæ. Et licet prolixè, nonnunquam res illæ recitentur, et circumstantiæ temporis, loci, personarum indicentur

^c More Nev. Pars II. cap. 41.

^d Num. cap. 12. com. 6. By the expressions made use of, there seems a manifest difference between a prophetic dream and a prophetic vision. In a dream the inspired person must be supposed to be asleep, when his external senses were shut up, and the ordinary operations of his mind suspended; but, in a vision, he was awake, and had the full use of his reason and understanding. *St. Paul* terms his being caught up into the third heaven, a vision and revelation of the Lord; but such was the impression made by it upon him, that he could not with certainty determine whether this happen'd by a corporeal translation or a divine impress; whether in the body, says he, or whether out of the body I cannot tell; God knoweth. For this reason, probably, in the Old Testament, visionary prophets are call'd Seers. 1. Sam. ix. 9. 2. Sam. xxiv. 11.

^e More Nev. Pars II. cap. 6.

centur; tamen, postquam intelligis quod opus illud sit parabola, certò persuasus esto quod acciderit in visione prophetiæ. If *Maimonides's* observation be just, we may from hence conclude that this whole transaction relative to *Abraham's* offering up his son, was in prophetic vision; as the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, says^f, *ὅτι αὐτὸς καὶ ἐν παραβολῇ ἐπορεύθη*.

It may not be improper to observe here what the author of the Divine Legation of *Moses* demonstrated, has not taken notice of, that in the preceding visionary exhibition to *Abraham*, Almighty God might, in some sort shew to him the mystery of the Trinity to be concern'd in man's Redemption. Dicitur *Jehovah* apparuisse *Abrahamo*^g, et mox dicuntur tres viri ipsi adstitisse^h, sensus ergo est, (ut ait Author exercitationum ad Historiam arce fœderisⁱ) Deum ipsi apparuisse, hoc est, testatum esse singularem quandam suam præsentiam: sub specie trium virorum; unde^k loquitur in singulari numero, tanquam cum Deo præsentem; dicens, Domine, si nunc inveni gratiam in oculis tuis, ne quæso, transeas à servo tuo: in plurali numero, capiatur, obsecro, parum aquæ, et lavate pedes vestros, et innitimini sub arbore; respiciens ad speciem trium virorum ipsi apparentium.

Posteaquam enim præmisit *Moses*, summaritèr quod Deus *Abrahamo* apparuerit, incipit quoque apparitionis illius formam exponere, quod nempe tres viros viderit, et deinde ad illos cucurrerit, eosque salutarit et allocutus fuerit. Ubi^m

Magnus

^f Heb. xi. 19. ^g Gen. xviii. 1. ^h Ibid. ver. 2. ⁱ Buxtorfi exercit. p. 21.
^k Gen. xviii. 3. ^l ver. 4. ^m More Nev. Pars II. Cap. 42.

Magnus ille Rabbi Chijah dicit, quod verba ista *Abrahami*, Domine, si nunc inveni gratiam in oculis tuis, nè quæso, transeas à servo tuo, *ad unum* et quidè *præcipuum*, inter illos, dicta fuisse, quod Rabbi *Moses Maimonides* discipulo suo tanquàm secretum magnum considerandum reliquit. Accedit quod de eo canit ecclesia *Tres vidit et unum adoravit*.

Nay, *Eftius*, in his comment on that passage to the *Hebrews* "For thereby, (speaking of hospitality) some have "entertain'd angels unawares" says, respicit Apostolus ad scripturam °, ubi leguntur *Abraham* et *Loth* angelos in humanâ specie venientes hospitio recepisse — Quâ quidè in re mysterium, proculdubio, significatum fuit vel *Trinitatis* et *Unitatis* in Divinis, ut plerique æstimant, vel potius incarnationis filii Dei — fuitque eo tempore impletum quod ipse Dominus, in evangelio, dicit ad Judæos, *Abraham* pater vester exultavit ut videret Diem meum, et vidit, et gavisus est.

I say, in effect admits of : for where is the difference ? *Maimonides* says, that Almighty God instructed his prophets in a dream or a vision; his lordship, that he did it by a familiar mode of information then in use; a scenical representation, I suppose in real performance. As the prophets actions (for they are not,) according to *Maimonides*, can have no moral import, except in intention, so his lordship will not allow of any °; in effect therefore they are the same. The advantage, if any, is certainly on the side of *Maimonides* and his followers, as that was the usual way of God's communicating with his prophets, and abundantly sufficient to answer

° Hebr. xiii. 2. ° Gen. xviii, 19. ° Div. Leg. Vol. II. p. 617. 626.

answer the Divine purpose of conveying his will to them.

We shall see this the clearer from a note of his lordship's, upon what *Maimonides* observes on the eighth, fourth and fifth chapters of the book of the prophet *Ezekiel*. But here he says, "The great author's reasoning is defective — because what *Ezekiel* saw in the chambers of imagery, in his eighth chapter, was in vision; therefore his delineation of the plan of the siege, and the shaving his beard, in the fourth and fifth chapters, were likewise in vision. But to make this illation logical, it is necessary that the circumstance in the eighth, and those in the fourth and fifth, be of the same species; but, on examination, we find them to be very different. That in the eighth, was to shew the prophet, the excessive idolatry of *Jerusalem*, by a sight of the very idolatry itself; those in the fourth and fifth, to convey the will of God, by the prophet to the people in a symbolic action. Now in the first case, says he, as we have shewn above, the information was properly by vision, either real or fantastical, and fully answer'd the end, namely, the prophet's information; but in the latter, a vision had been improper: for a vision to the prophet was no information to the people."

Here, then it may be ask'd, was the command given by God to *Abraham*, to offer up his only son, with the circumstances attending it, an information, by action instead of words, of the great sacrifice for the redemption of mankind, intended for *Abraham's* satisfaction only, or for information

mation to the people? And his lordship has answer'd for himself, to *Abraham*, solely for his own use¹. If so, then by his reasoning on the two cases of *Ezekiel* above cited; if indeed there be any difference between them, (for the illation is strictly logical) the information might properly have been by vision, either real or fanatical, as it would fully have answered the end, namely, *Abraham's* satisfaction. But his lordship seems so favourable to his own interpretation, that tho' in one case it is sufficient, in the other it is not so. And for this he has got a salvo: for he says², (after having taken notice that the prophets instructed the people in the will of God, by the representation of material images, and convers'd with them in signs) that "where God teaches the prophet, and in compliance to the custom of that time, condescends to the same mode of instruction, the significative action is generally chang'd into a vision, either natural or extraordinary — but not always." That illustrious instance, and that only, by his lordship produced, it seems is an exception to this rule. Perhaps indeed, he may tell us, that information by sensible and intuitive action was in use in *Abraham's* time, and by vision in *Ezekiel's*. But the answer which God gave to *Abraham* in vision, in return to his inquiry, Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit this land; and which (being prior to this, may seem to imply that what preceded was face to face³,

¹ Div. Leg. Vol. II. p. 609.

² Ibid. p. 83, 84.

³ It is to be observ'd, as to prophecy in general, that as well the rational as imaginative power of man is supposed to be affected. In which case the ancient *Jews* held the imaginative power to be set forth

as God spake to his servant *Moses*, and that what succeeded was in vision only,) entirely takes off that pretence. And if in this, his suppos'd latter inquiry, the information was solely for *Abraham's* satisfaction, 'tis equally probable that God did answer him in vision likewise: for no man hath seen God at any time^u, and the ways of God are equal^v.

Divine inspiration abstractly consider'd, benefits only that person, to whom it is conveyed; (but this seems not so much prophetic as nouthetical information) and instances may be found wherein it has rested in this private use only, particularly in the case of *Elijah*, when he was admonish'd by ' the word of the Lord to flee for his life, to avoid the persecution that was rais'd against him by his country-men. Thus *Joseph* was warned by an angel in a dream, to flee into *Egypt* with *Mary* his wife and the child *Jesus*, to escape the cruelty of *Herod* in massacreing the young children^w. And the same may be said of the account which is given of that Lucta which happen'd between *Jacob* and the angel^x.

But as a stage, on which certain visa were exhibited, yet so as that the understandings of the prophets were always kept awake and strongly acted by God, in the midst of those apparitions, to see the mysteries couch'd in them; but that where the imaginative faculty is not thus represented as the scene of prophetic illumination, but the impressions of things without any pictures are made immediately upon the understanding itself, there it is reckon'd to be the gradus Mosaicus, wherein God speaks, as it were face to face. Here all imagination ceases, and the representation of truth, by an insight into futurity descends not so low as the imaginative part, but is made in the highest degree of reason and understanding. This may explain to us what is meant by face to face. ^u John i. 18. ^v Ibid. iv. 12. ^w Exod. xiii. 20.

^x Ezek. xviii. 29. ^y 1 Kings xvii. 3. ^z Mat. ii. 13. ^a Gen. xxxii.

But in the two cases of *Ezekiel* above cited, as well as what happen'd to the prophets in general, the visionary impressions were indeed *primarily* for their use, but *ultimately* for the people's to whom they were sent. What reason, for instance, can be given why *Ezekiel* should be admitted into the chambers of imagery, but only, that he might inveigh, and that the more forcibly, against the idolatrous practices of the children of *Israel*?

In which view this whole transaction relative to *Abraham's* offering up his Son, may be look'd upon as a prophetic visionary information to *Abraham primarily*, and in him to *all mankind*, of the manner and circumstances of our redemption by *Christ*, and of that faith and obedience which would be requir'd under the gospel dispensation; how it was to be brought about, and what were to be the terms and conditions of it. And in this sense St. *Peter* himself, seems to have understood it, when he says^b, "Of which
"salvation the prophets have inquired and searched dili-
"gently, who prophesied of the *grace* that should come
"unto you, searching what and what manner of time the
"spirit of *Christ*, which was in them, did signify, when it
"testified beforehand the sufferings of *Christ*, and the glory
"that should follow; unto whom it was revealed, that *not*
"unto themselves, but unto us, they should minister the things
"which are now reported unto you, by them that have
"preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent
"down

^b 1 Epistle i. 10, 11, 12,

"down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

Now in these last words, *which things the angels desire to look into*, the apostle also seems to point out to us the way by which the prophets receiv'd their intelligence, concerning *this grace* that should follow: for tho' there is no doubt but that it was God himself, by whom the whole frame of prophecy was dispensed, yet as a foremention'd author observes^c, the immediate efficient seems not to have been God himself, but indeed an angel; *Idque propter hoc quoque notum fundamentum et principium*, as *Maimonides* expresses it^d, *quòd nulla prophetia fiat nisi in somnio aut visione, et per manum angeli*^e; and whether St. Peter in the
above

^c *Smith's Select Discourses.*

^d *More Nev. p. 2. ch. 41.*

^e *Præterea scito*, says *Maimonides* to his pupil, *quod omnium eorum prophetarum qui prophetiam sibi factam esse dicunt, quidam eam angelo alicui, quidam verò Deo optimo maximo ascribant et attribuant, licet per angeli ministerium quoque ipsis obtigerit, de quo sapientes nostri nos erudierunt, quando aiunt, et dixit Dominus ad eam (Gen. xxv. 23.) viz. וְיִדְּוּ עָלַי הַמַּלְאָכִים* hoc est, per manus angeli — *More Nev. cap. 41. p. 2.* Thus when *Abaziab*, king of *Israel* (2 Kings i. 3.) sent to *Baal-zebub* the God of *Ekron* to inquire whether he should recover of his indisposition, occasion'd by a fall from his upper-chamber; the Angel of the Lord said to *Elijab* the Tishbite, arise, get up to meet the messengers of the king of *Samaria*, and say unto them; Is it not because there is not a God in *Israel* that ye go to enquire of *Baal-zebub*? And yet (ver. 16.) we have all this message attributed to God by the prophet, as if he had receiv'd the command immediately from God himself. St. *Jerome* in his comment on Gal. iii. 19. is full to this purpose, his words are these. *Quòd autem ait, Lex ordinata per angelos*, hoc vult intelligi, quòd in omni veteri Testamento, ubi angelus primum visus refertur, et postea quasi Deus loquens inducitur, angelus quidem verè ex ministris pluribus, quicumque sit visus,

above mention'd words, as some commentators suppose, alludes in a mystic sense, ad cherubinos, quorum oculi, versùs propitiatorum, spectabant, or to the frequency of angels appearing to the prophets in a dream, or vision, in order for their information in this behalf, let the intelligent reader judge^f. Thou spakest sometime in vision unto thy saints, says the psalmist^g, viz. Prophetis Samueli, Nathani et Gad; qui tres de Davide promissiones à Deo acceperunt. For the prophecy came not in old time, says St. Peter^h by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The word of the Lord is said to have been precious in the days of *Eli*; there was no open vision, but

visus, sed in illo mediator loquatur, qui dicat, *Ego sum Deus Abraham, Deus Isaac, Deus Jacob*. Nec mirum si Deus loquatur in angelis, cum etiam per Angelos, qui in hominibus sunt, loquatur Deus in prophetis, dicente *Zacharia*, et ait angelus qui loquebatur in me, ac deinceps inferente, *hæc dicit Dominus omnipotens*.

We may add to this, as a thing well known in the apostles time, that (when *Claudius Lysias* had rescued *Paul* out of the hands of the Jews, who were minded to kill him on account of his vision in his way to *Damascus*, which he gave as the cause of his conversion to christianity, and on the morrow had brought him into their council to know wherefore he was accused of them) upon a dissention that arose between the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Scribes that were of the Pharisees part, arose and strove, saying, we find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. Acts xxiii.

^f Polus in synopsi (Vol 5. p. 1052) ad hæc verba apostoli (1 Tim. iii. 16. *μία ἐστὶν τὸ τῆς ἁγίας μυστηρίου θεὸς ὁφανεῖς ἐν σαρκί, ἰδιαιῶς ἐν πνεύματι, ὁφθὲν Ἀγγέλοις* ait, *Priores duæ ἀποδείξεις* — divinitatis Christi incarnati *Homines respiciebant*, quibus se aspectabilem præbuit: *hæc tertia angelis exhibita est*, qui et testes hujus mysterii erant et præcones.

^g Psal. lxxxix. 20.

^h 2 Pet. i. 19.

but when the Lord called unto *Samuel*, in vision; all Israel acknowledg'd that *Samuel* was establish'd to be a prophet of the Lord¹. And tho' *Samuel* is said there, not yet to have known the Lord, yet we must not suppose that *Samuel* was then ignorant of the true God; but that he knew not the manner in which the divine spirit was wont to awaken the attention of the prophets. Thus far is certain, that many relations of the prophets, amongst which class I rank *Abraham*; for at the fourth verse of the fifteenth chapter of GENESIS it is said, that the word of the Lord came unto him in a vision; and at the seventh verse of the twentieth chapter God said to *Abimelech* in a dream, *he is a prophet*, are not to be taken in a literal sense; and that frequently where it is not positively laid down in those relations, that the subject matter was in a dream or a vision; yet the nature of the things related require that they should be understood as prophetic visions only.

To this purpose let us hear what a foremention'd author deeply versed in the mode of scripture expression observes². "There are many times, says he, in the midst of prophetic narrations, some things related to be done by the prophets themselves, upon the command of the prophetick voice, which have been generally conceiv'd to have been acted really, the grossest of all, not excepted, as *Hosea* his taking a harlot for his wife, and begetting children &c. which conceit Mr. *Calvin*, hath in part happily undermined."

But *al*

¹ 1 Sam. iii. 7. ² Smith's Select Discourses. ch. vi. p. 213.

But we shall not here doubt to conclude both of that and all other actions of the prophets, which they were enjoyn'd upon the stage of prophecy, that they were only scenical and imaginary, except indeed they were such as of their own nature must have an historical meaning, in which an imaginary performance would not serve the turn. To instance in particulars: At the twenty-fifth chapter of the book of the prophet *Jeremiah*, at the fifteenth and following verses we are told of the prophet's taking a wine cup from God, and carrying it to all nations far and near, to wit, *Jerusalem* and the cities of *Judah*, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof—to *Pharaoh* king of *Egypt*, and his servants and his princes and all his people. And all the mingled people; and all the kings of the land of *Uz*. And all the kings of the land of the *Philistines* and *Askelon* and *Azzah* and *Ekron*, and the remnant of *Ashdod*. *Edom* and *Moab*, and the children of *Ammon*. And all the kings of *Tyrus*, and all the kings of *Zidon*, and the kings of the *Isles* which are beyond the sea. — And all these he is said to have made drink of this cup. Which can have no other sense than that which is imaginary, tho' we are not told that all this was in a vision, the nature of the thing not permitting any real performance thereof. Again we are told of his being order'd to take his girdle and go to *Euphrates*, and to hide it there in the hole of a rock, and of his doing so,¹ &c. when it is well known, that *Jeremiah* lived his whole time in the land of *Israel*, and never so much as saw *Euphrates*. His design herein being to

¹ Jer. iii. 4.

the approaching captivity and the consequences of it.

Thus, again we read of *Ezekiel's* eating a roll given him of God^m; of his being order'd to take a tile and pour-tray upon it the city of *Jerusalem*; to lay siege to it, and build a fort against itⁿ: the whole of which, no doubt, if we consider circumstances, was a prophetic visionary parable, notwithstanding God tells him, that in all this he should be a sign to the house of *Israel*. He is there commanded to lie continually before this tile, so pourtray'd upon, (tho' we are no where told that he did so,) three hundred and ninety days upon his left side, and after that forty more upon his right, and to bake his bread that he should eat all this while, after the manner as is there appointed.

From these and other instances which are obvious, and need not therefore be multiplied, it is sufficiently manifest, that we are not in prophetic narratives of this sort, to understand any thing else, but the history of the visions themselves which appear'd unto them. The design of all which being to represent something strongly to the prophet's understanding, and effectually to inform it in the substance of those things which he was to instruct that people in to whom he was sent,

Nay, so confident is he in this behalf, that in opposition to those who think the literal sense and historical verity of all ought to be entertain'd, except it be expressly said to have been done in a vision, he asserts that tho' it be not always positively laid down in those narrations, that the

^m Ezek. iii. 3.

ⁿ Ibid. iv. 1, 2.

res gesta was in vision; yet the nature and scope of prophecy so requiring that things should thus be acted in imagination, we should rather expect some positive declaration to assure us that *they were perform'd*, in the history, if indeed it were so.

'Tis true, in the case of *Abraham* with regard to the offering up his Son, it has generally been thought, that a real history is related, it being so circumstantial a one, that the least inconsistency cannot be found in it. That God did tempt *Abraham*, in this case it is expressly affirm'd; and that this temptation was offer'd to him either in a dream, or a vision, will readily be allowed. Which way soever it came to him, certain it is that it happen'd to him in the night-time; and the impression was made so strong upon his mind, that 'tis said, he rose early in the morning and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him and *Isaac* his son, and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day *Abraham* lift up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And *Abraham* said unto his young men; abide you here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And *Abraham* took the wood of the burnt-offering and laid it upon *Isaac* his son, and he took the fire in his hand and a knife, and they went both of them together.— And they came to the place which God had told him of; and *Abraham* built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound *Isaac* his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And *Abraham* stretched

stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, *Abraham, Abraham*. And he said, here am I. And he said, lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

From all which history, I say, so circumstantially related (notwithstanding, as I observ'd before prior to this, it is said, that after these things, the word of the Lord came unto *Abraham* in a vision; and in scripture language, we see nothing is more frequent than to find the prophets apparently doing those things which they declare and foretel) the generality of mankind, thro' gross conceptions of the Deity, have been apt to conclude concerning its reality. I conclude also farther, that the trial or rather evidence of *Abraham's* faith was *one great*, nay, I may say *the principal purpose* of God's command to him.

The principal purpose of God in sending his son into the world, of which the offering up of *Isaac* was a type or figure or scenical representation, was to promote obedience to the laws of God. If that had been observ'd from the beginning, where had been the use for the christian revelation? obedience, then, in the type or figure was of more consequence than the mode or circumstances of the figure itself; as to obey, we are assured°, is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. Whereupon it seems evident, that this signal instance of faith and obedience in the Patriarch,

was

° 1 Sam. xv. 22.

was as much intended by the wisdom of God to be given, as it were in a figure, for the use and observance of mankind, as his offering upon the altar, in the person of *Isaac*, was to typify the death and resurrection of Christ with the blessings to mankind consequent thereon. And here, let it be remark'd; that whether *Abraham's* behaviour in this affair be look'd upon as real or imaginary; that is, whether he actually did take three days journey in order to offer up his son at the place which God told him of, or whether this whole transaction, (without inquiring into the nature of a type) was in prophetick vision only; yet in the divine estimation of things, this may by no means take away the moral import of the action, supposing that *Abraham's* disposition, well known unto God, who is the searcher of hearts, was such as that he was really ready to execute the command right and fit in itself: for God has authorized in substance, that whereof this was only a shadow, in that he spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all^p; which seems abundantly evident, as well from the preceding history of the Patriarch, as from the divine approbation of his conduct in this respect. Nay, it has been asserted*, that tho' visionary representations are only as the images of things in a glass, yet they may exhibit as clear a view of what is so represented, as if it was conveyed by the senses: for as in both cases the mind is supposed to be equally passive in receiving impressions, so in other respects it may exercise an equal liberty in both. It may be as capable of reasoning and deliberating with respect to the
visionary

* Rom. viii. 32.

* Farmer's Inquiry, &c. p. 55.

visionary representation, as with regard to the objects of sense; and consequently the one may serve for the trial, the display of virtue, in the divine account, no less than the other. However that be, the instance before us affords a shining pattern of faith and obedience for mankind to walk by, and as such St. *James* very justly insists upon it¹. Therefore, I say, I conclude also further that the *trial* or rather *evidence* of *Abraham's* faith, was one great, nay, I may say, the *principal purpose* of God's command to him; that his readiness to comply with the appointment of God, was the reason or foundation of that promise made to him, "that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed;" that therein indeed he saw *the effects of*, as well as at the offering up of *Isaac*, the manner and circumstances of our redemption by Christ, or *the day of Christ*, but as a proper reward in consequence of *obedience*. Quo modo vidit? primò fidei oculis, ut declaratur²; secundò in figurâ, nimirum *Isaaci* immolati adeoque typi Christi³.

Historia *Abrahami*, says *Maimonides*, to his pupil, de ligatione *Isaaci*, comprehendit duo magna fundamenta legis. Unum est nobis indicare quousque se extendat amor et timor Dei, idè dicit angelus, nunc scio, &c.⁴. Q. D. ex hac actione, propter quam, ab omnibus, *Deum timens* vocaberis, cognoscent omnes quantus in te sit *timor Dei* et quousque pertingat. Alterum est docere quod, in rei veritate, crediderint prophetæ ea, quæ ipsis, per prophetiam, à Deo oblata fuerunt; ne quis cogitet idè quia in visione aut somnio

¹ James ii. 21, 22. ² Hebr. xi. 13. & Rom. 4. 12.

³ Synops. Vol. 4. p. 1262. ⁴ Gen. xxii. 12.

James Healin

aut mediante virtute imaginatrice id fit, non semper fieri
 feverà id quod audiunt vel quod ipsis representatur, aut
 aliud dubium hìc relinquatur. Ideò voluit nos, hìc, certos
 reddere quod omnia ea, quæ prophetæ vident in visione
 prophetiæ, vera sunt et certa, apud prophetam, et extra
 omnem dubitationis aleam, penès ipsum posita; adeoque
 non aliter se habent quam res omnes existentes, quæ sensi-
 bus vel intellectu apprehenduntur. Probatio hujus rei est
 hæc, quod *Abraham* voluerit jugulare filium suum unicum
 quem dilexit, sicut præceperat Deus, licet præceptum illud
 ei, vel in visione vel in somnio datum fuerit. Quod si pro-
 phetæ essent dubitabundi in somnio prophetiæ, aut si dubi-
 tarent, aliquo modo, de iis quæ in visione prophetiæ appre-
 hendunt, sanè non consensissent ad talia facienda, à quibus
 natura abhorreat; neque potuisset *Abraham* in animo suo
 invenire ut faceret tam magnam et dubiam actionem.

Ac conveniens omninò fuit ut ligatio hæc fieret per manus
Abrahami et *Isaaci*. *Abraham* enim Patriarcha primus fuit
 qui incepit docere unitatem Dei; fidem illam confirmare,
 propagare et animis hominum implantare; undè dicitur,
 quia novi eum quòd præcipiet &c. Quemadmodum igitur
 secuti sunt homines sententias ejus veras, quas ab ipso au-
 diverunt; ita decet quoque ut sequantur ea, quæ sequuntur
 ex ipsius operibus; imprimis verò actionem hanc, quâ con-
 firmavit veritatem prophetiæ, et timoris ac amoris Dei
 fastigium nobis monstravit. Sic itaque intelligenda sunt ea,
 quæ de tentatione in scripturâ legimus; nequaquam autem
 eo si Deus idèò probaret ac tentaret hominem, ut ipse sciat
 aliquid,

40

is right in one case, would be right in the other, et vice versâ;) that we will not be afraid of any future attempts that may be made against them.

We will conclude then upon the whole, that the moral character of God, in requiring *Isaac* to be thus offer'd for a burnt-offering, as well as that of his servant *Abraham*, in complying with such his command, is not at all injured by such objections as either have been, or can be offer'd; that the foundation of religion in both these respects standeth sure; that the one had a right to give the command; the other was oblig'd to comply with it. Yet as this was an instance of the greatest trial and difficulty, so it was a proof of the strictest respect and reverence to God; and therefore was justly and publicly made the ground of God's extraordinary favours to him. Which is well represented to us by the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus. "*Abraham*, says he*, was a great
 "father of many people; in glory was there none like
 "unto him; who kept the law of the most high, and
 "was in covenant with him: he established the covenant
 "in his flesh, and when he was proved, he was found
 "faithful. Therefore he assured him by an oath, that he
 "would bless the nations in his seed, and that he would
 "multiply him as the dust of the earth, and exalt his seed
 "as the stars, and cause them to inherit from sea to sea,
 "and from the river unto the utmost part of the land."

* Ecclus xlv. 19, 20, 21.

F I N I S. *FINIS*

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Pag. 7. l. 20. for their obedience, read, this obedience.

Pag. 12. l. 16. for R. Chijah's, read, from R. Chijah's.

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"faithful. Therefore he assured himself, and said, that he
"would bless the nations in his seed, and that he would
"multiply him as the dust of the earth, and said, his seed
"as the stars, and came them to inherit from him to be
"and from the river unto the utmost part of the land."

T W V S